

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 EB-07 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3667

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 14076

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGSC PGOV, PINT, TH, EAIR

SUBJ: TIME BOMBING AT DON MUANG AIRPORT

REF: SONGKHLA 115

1. ON JUNE 24 A TIME BOMB PLACED IN THE MAIN DEPARTURE LOUNGE OF DON MUANG AIRPORT IN BANGKOK EXPLODED, INJURING FOUR PERSONS, ONE SERIOUSLY. THERE WAS LITTLE DAMAGE TO THE BUILDING ITSELF. ANOTHER TIME BOMB PLACED AT THE OTHER END OF THE LOUNGE FAILED TO GO OFF.

2. SECURITY WAS TIGHTENED AT THE AIRPORT AFTER THE BLAST. SECURITY GUARDS WERE POSTED AT ALL ENTRANCES TO THE MAIN DEPARTURE LOUNGE WAITING HALL, WHICH IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, TO SEARCH INCOMING PERSONS FOR POSSIBLE EXPLOSIVES OR FIREARMS.

3. IN A LEAFLET FOUND AT THE SCENE OF THE BLAST AND IN THE BAG CONTAINING THE UNEXPLODED TIME BOMB, THE SABILLILAH MUSLIM SEPARATIST GROUP CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BOMBING. THIS GROUP IS A RELATIVELY LITTLE KNOWN FACTION OF ONE OF THE NUMEROUS MALAY SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH THAILAND. AMONG THE SEVEN DEMANDS
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THEY MADE IN THE LEAFLET WAS ONE FOR AUTONOMY FOR THE FIVE SOUTHERNMOST MALAY-SPEAKING PROVINCES OF THAILAND (SATU, SONGKHLA, PATTANI, YALA, NARATHIWAT).

4. ACCORDING TO AMCONSUL SONGKHLA LOCAL OFFICIALS THERE SAID THAT THIS GROUP HAS PREVIOUSLY ENGAGED IN ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN URBAN AREAS IN SOUTH THAILAND.

FOR EXAMPLE, THEY ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SABOTAGE OF A TRAIN IN JUNE AND THE BOMBING OF A BANK LAST MAY.

5. AMCONSUL SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT OFFICIALS THERE MAINTAIN THAT SUCH ACTS OF URBAN VIOLENCE BY SEPARATISTS ARE DESIGNED TO DRAMATIZE THEIR CAUSE AND ATTRACT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM ABROAD. THE BOMBING OF THE BANK MENTIONED ABOVE CAME AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAI SEPARTISTS WERE HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN TRIOPLI.

6. AMCONSUL SONGKHLA ALSO NOTED THAT LTG PIN THAMMASI, COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH ARMY WHICH OPERATES IN SOUTH THAILAND, IS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE SABILLILAH GROUP BEFORE THE BOMBING AT DON MUANG AIRPORT JUNE 24. YALA PROVINCE POLICE AND OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE GROUP FOR SOME TIME. THIS HIGHLIGHTS THE FACT THAT INADEQUATE SHARING OF INFORMATION BETWEEN POLICE, MILITARY, AND CIVILIAN ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE SOUTH CONTINUES TO BE A PROBLEM.

7. COMMENT: THE DEPARTURE WAITING LOUNGE WAS EASILY CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC. THE BOMBING ITSELF WAS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. THE SABILLILAH GROUP DID GET SOME PUBLICITY AND NOTORIETY FOR THEMSELVES AND REMINDED THE RTG OFFICIALS OF THEIR LONG STANDING PROBLEMS WITH THE MUSLIMS IN THE SOUTH. WHETHER THE RTG WILL PAY ANY MORE ATTENTION TO THE SOUTH THAN AT PRESENT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. WHITEHOUSE

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